

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Seven Wise Mistresses
OF
ROME.

WHEREIN

The Treachery of evil Ministers is discovered, Innocency cleared, and the Wisdom of the Seven Wise Mistresses displayed.



Printed and Sold in London,

The HISTORY of
The Seven Wise Mistresses.



C H A P. I.

The Empress Lucretia commits her Daughter Sabrina to the Care of the Seven Wise Mistresses, who, having tutored her, return her to her Mother, with her Behaviour.

IN the city of Rome reigned the Empress Lucretia, who had a beautiful daughter named Sabrina. When she was six years old the Emperor her father died, and her mother committed her to the Care of Seven Wise Mistresses, famous for wisdom, and resolving hard questions, and for skill and learning excelled all women in the world. She having been with them seven years, they appointed a day to try her proficiency in learning, and put the three following questions to her :

I. What is the most acceptable thing to God?—She answered, To obey willingly all his commandments.

II. What

II. What is it gives the greatest pleasure to the soul of man?—She said, The answer of a good conscience.

III. What knowledge made women wisest?—She replied, The knowledge of good and evil.

The Mistresses rejoiced at these accurate answers, and were of opinion, that for wisdom she would excell all her progenitors.

Soon after they received a command from the Empress to bring her home; on which they retired into the garden to consult the planets, whether the event would be fortunate or no; but observing a great contention among the signs, they foresaw that if she spoke more words than one, her enemies would have power over her, to betray her to the most shameful death. This troubled the Mistresses much, which Sabrina perceiving, demanded the cause; it being told her, she viewed the stars herself, and found it true; but promised to follow their advice, and hoped by their assistance to pervert the malice of her enemies; so the seven Mistresses agreed to take each a day to plead for the Princess, and at the expiration of that time the malignity of the stars would be over, and she might speak for herself; telling her, that the single word she was to speak must be JUSTICE.

When she came before her mother, she clasping her in her arms, and kissing her, said, O my daughter, the only delight I have in the world, whom God preserve for



future blessings, how is it with you? I hope you are now fairly qualified, by learning, to sit on my throne after me..... The Empress receiving no answer, was surprised at her silence, and demanded of her, What she had learned of the Mistresses? She answered, **JUSTICE**; and bowing herself, spoke not a word more.—This enraged the Empress, who vowed the Mistresses should all be put to death: yet being willing once more to try her daughter, took her by the hand, and led her into an arbour, where being seated, she said to her, My dear daughter, here is a pen, ink

and paper, if you will not speak, write the reason of your silence.—The Princess taking the pen in her hand, wrote these lines :

Thro' learning which doth me adorn,
 I very plainly see,
 The stars where under I was born,
 Prove hazardous to me.

And I in bed have lately dream'd,
 What shortly shall ensue,
 I seven times shall be condemn'd
 In judgment seat by you.

When the Empress read these lines, she was astonished, and being exceedingly troubled to think that she should give judgment seven times against her own daughter, she wrung her hands, and lamented.

C H A P. II.

Radamantus endeavours to debauch Sabrina, and on being repulsed, he conspires to take away her life.

THE Empress thinking the affairs of government too heavy for a woman, chose from among her counsellors one Radamantus, a wise and crafty politician, to assist her therein, in whom she reposed great confidence, and readily consented to every thing he conceived. This confidence made him imperious, insolent, and ambitious; and as the Empress was old and infirm, he thought the only way to secure the throne to himself after her decease, was to contrive the death of her daughter, by accusing her of adultery; which by the Roman law was punished with death without mercy.

One day Radamantus from his window saw the Princess in an arbour in the palace garden, and thought it a fit opportunity to put his design in practice; so going down to her, she was surpris'd at his sudden approach, but upon recovering herself a little,

Radamantus

Radamantus thus began : Most lovely lady, give me leave to tell you, that your beauty at first sight kindled a fire within my breast, which nothing can allay but your sleeping with me upon a bed of roses. The Princess turning about, with a scornful look repulsed him. This immediately turned his love into fury, and running out of the garden, he cried out, He saw the Princess with a man under the fig-tree, committing fornication, to the breach of the law, the shame of her parents, and the destruction of her own soul.

The Empress at this was struck with horror and amazement, and summoning her council, she again asked Radamantus where he saw it ? He said, under the fig-tree, and that when the man saw him, he ran away. They then hastened into the garden, and finding the Princess alone, asked her what man had been there with her ? She answered not a word.

The Empress, seeing she was in the garden, as Radamanrus had reported, believed all he said, and in a great rage commanded her to be burnt at a stake.

CHAP. III.

The first Mistress's Intercession.

WHEN the day appointed for the execution of the Princess was come, the people assembled with weeping eyes to go thereto. Then came Halicujah, the first Mistress to the Empress, and said, most gracious Lady, the Divine Being knows your daughter is innocent of the crime she is charged with by Radamantus, and that she is not speechless without good cause; and if you put her to death, it will happen to you as it did to the Queen of Syria, who poisoned her husband through the persuasion of a wicked person. The Empress desirous to hear the story, respited the execution of the Princess, and the Mistress began:

Once in Syria reigned a Queen, who was fond of seeing jests and tournaments, and having one day appointed her courtiers to try their valour before her, none so well pleased her as the valour of Darsius, son to the King of Parthia; and finding him to be an accomplished

complished Prince, she soon after married him.

They proved a happy pair, and were well beloved by their subjects.

They had not been married long, before news was brought that the King his father lay dying, and he must go and take possession of the kingdom. While he was gone, an evil counsellor, who was privately in love with the Queen, intercepted all the King's letters, and informed the Queen, that he had married another lady in his own country; which so grieved her, that she cried out, O my Lord, wherein have I offended you, that another should reap the consolation of your love. The King in the mean time wondered he received no letter from the Queen; likewise lamented, saying, O my dear Lady, what is the reason I can never hear how you do, nor how the affairs of your kingdom stand!—All this time the wicked counsellor intercepted their letters on both sides; he invented a strong poison, which he told the Queen was of such virtue, that if she put a little into the hollow of a ring, and sent it to the King, as a token of her love, it would make him forsake all other women, and hasten home to her. The Queen believing this, it was accordingly done, and the King joyfully received it; but his finger soon swelling, he sent to his physicians, who

who told him the ring was envenomed with the most strong poison, and that his finger must be cut off, or else it would affect his whole body. Cut it off then, said the King, which being done, his arm swelled, and he had that cut off also; but finding his whole body infected, thus exclaimed against his Queen: O thou ungrateful woman! why hast thou done thus to him who loved you equal to his own soul! how couldst thou return the most infectious poison for the most ardent love! And saying this, he sunk down in his chair, and died. The messenger hastened home, and told the Queen all that had happened, at which, wringing her hands, she cried out, What have I done! by the advice of an evil counsellor, I have mistakenly slain my dear husband, the King; so taking up a knife, she thrust it into her breast, and instantly expired.

Then, said the Empress, for this example's sake my daughter shall not die.

C H A P. IV.

The Second Mistress's Intercession.

WHEN Radamantus heard the Princess was reprieved, he pretended great grief, on which the execution was again ordered; but prevented by the following story being told by the Second Mistress.

A lady of Barbary and her husband being on a long voyage, by bad weather had been so long at sea, that all their provision was spent, and the people obliged to cast lots who should be killed to feed the rest, and so until all were killed except the lady and her husband, who would not eat each other, but sewing themselves up in a carpet, laid down on the deck, saying, The great God of Heaven assist us.

They soon fell asleep, and in the meantime a griffin came, who took up the carpet, and carried it to an island inhabited by lions, bears, &c. When that the griffin had gotten them into his den, he began for to peck the carpet, which awakened them, and the husband fought and killed the griffin, and slew
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all his young but not knowing how to get off the island, they wandered up and down, and at last the man died, leaving the Lady in great distress. One day in her wandering she met a lion, who much frightened her; but on his near approach she observed he halted, and held up his foot to her; upon which looked at it, and finding in it a thorn, pulled it out: This done, the lion fawned upon her, led her to his den, fed her with the prey he took, and always walked abroad with her, to preserve her from the other wild beasts; and at last a ship took her to her father's in Barbary. Some time after, her father being killed by a wild boar, the steward reported, that the lion had killed his master; upon which the servants fell upon the lion and killed him.

My daughter, said the Empress, shall not die, for that examples sake.

CHAP. V.

The third Mistress's Intercession.

RADAMANTUS having a third time obtained an order for the Princess's execution, the third Mistress prevented it, by telling the following story:

A Knight once travelling into foreign parts, lost his way in a wood, and took up his lodging in a countryman's house. In the middle of the night the man's wife was delivered of a fine boy, which the Knight found by the stars was to be hanged; so the next day he named the child, and departed homewards. In process of time this boy took it in his head to travel, and by chance came to the house of his godfather, where by degrees he was advanced to be his steward; but being envied by the rest of his servants, they resolved on his destruction. Accordingly, he having got leave to return to his own country, they put the Knight's cup in his portmantua, which being missed, they told the Knight his steward had stole it; and on searching his portmantua,

mantua, it being found, the Knight ordered him to be hanged. As they were leading him to the gallows he said, Well, I find what my godfather foretold is coming to pass, who gave me a little piece of parchment, on which he wrote these words, My good child, serve God, and pray to him continually to pass this fate from thee, or else thy fortune is to be hanged: an I sealing it up in wax, charged my father that no one should read it till I was capable of reading it myself, which when I did, I betook myself to travel, in order to prevent the prediction: I now find it to be in vain, and that the prophecy will be shortly accomplished. The Knight hearing this, called for the paper, which being shewed him, he declared it to be his hand writing, owned him for his god-son, and reserved the execution. Then causing a second trial, his accusers were condemned and executed, and he married to the Knight's only daughter.

The Empress said, You have shewed me a good example, and my daughter shall not die.

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CHAP. VI.

The Fourth Mistress's Intercession.

THE fourth Mistress finding the execution again ordered, prevented it by the following story :

In Thrace reigned Queen Hecuba, who was wise and peaceable; but the King of Lycóna brought against her a numerous army, and besieged her city; the enemy was several times repulsed by the garrison; but two wicked ministers persuaded the Queen to make peace with them, by giving them a large sum of money, and as a ratification thereof, to permit a wooden horse to be brought into the temple of Minerva; to all which she consented. In this horse was placed a thousand men, who under the direction of these two wicked-ministers, in the night, when the inhabitants were rejoicing at the war being over, they issued forth on the inhabitants, killed the innocent Queen and her daughter, burnt the city to ashes, and then taking the two traitors, returned to their own land.

For this example, said the Empress, my daughter shall not die.

CHAP. VII.

The Fifth Mistress's Intercession.

NOTwithstanding the former relations, Radamantus obtained another order for the Princess's execution; which when the fifth Mistress heard, she came and told the Empress the following story:

In China reigned a virtuous Queen, who after being long married proved to be with child. The King being obliged to go into the country, received a letter from an evil counsellor, that the Queen was familiar with a nobleman of the court; on which she was imprisoned; where she was delivered of a Princess, who was then put into a little boat, and turned out to sea; where she was taken up by a poor shepherd, and brought up to keep sheep upon the mountains.—One day the King her father being a hunting, inquired of the shepherd if that was his child? He then told his Majesty the manner of his finding it; when the King suspecting it to be his

own

own daughter, took her home, and sent to inquire of the Oracle concerning her, when he received for an answer; That the Queen was innocent. the child lawfully begotten, and his counsellor a traitor. He immediately released the Queen, and the traitor was drawn to pieces by wild horses.

For this example, said the Empress, my daughter shall not die.

C H A P. VII.

The Sixth Mistress's Intercession.

A GAIN was the execution ordered, but reprieved by the sixth Mistress's following story :

In Burgundy lived a widow Princess, who fell in love with a Knight of Malta, then residing at her court; but he took his leave, and returned to his own country, promising to come again very soon : but the time being elapsed, and he not returning, an old counsellor told the Princess the Knight was much offended with a favourite hound, and a parrot. she kept; upon which she ordered them both to be killed. The Knight came, staid a month,

month, and went home again with his former promises, and he ~~new~~ actually performing it, the counsellor told her the knight was more in love with her daughter than her; on which the Princess ordered her daughter to be put to death; but as the executioner was going, to do his office, the knight prevented him, and accusing the counsellor of treachery, he was hanged.

CHAP. VIII.

The Seventh Mistress's Intercession.

RADAMANTUS being full of fury at the long delay of the execution, went and told the Empress, that if the Princess was not executed that day, he would resign his share in the government; for he looked upon the delay as a doubt of the truth of his accusation. The Empress, frightened at this menace, gave orders the seventh time for her daughter to be put to death. Then came the seventh Mistress, and desired she would hear her story, which would be short; and after much importunity the execution was respited, and she began as follows.

There was a rich widow, who had an only daughter, the sole heiress of all her large possessions. An old priest courted the widow, and so overcame her by promises of marriage



that she disinherited her daughter, and made all her estate over to him, after which he rejecting her, she stabbed herself; and the old priest turned the daughter out of doors.

The Empress thanked the Mistress for this example, and pardoned her daughter, who now having undergone the silence imposed upon her, was at full liberty to make use of her speech.

C H A P. IX.

The Princess defends herself, and accuses Radamantus.

THE Mistresses hastened to fetch the Princess to her mother, amidst the acclamations of all the people, who when she came before the Empress, fell on her knees, saying, Hail, Royal Mother! the cause of my silence was the malignity of some stars, who foretold, if I spoke more than one word for seven days space, I should die a shameful death by the influence of a wicked enemy.

The Empress, rejoiced to hear her daughter speak, fell on her neck, and tenderly embraced her.

Then the Princess accused Radamantus of his attempt to seduce her in the garden; also of his committing fornication with a pretended gentleman of his bedchamber, who being fetched, confessed herself to be a woman.

Radamantus standing silent and confused Thou wicked wretch, said the Empress to him, was not thy concubine sufficient to satisfy thy depraved appetite, but thou must attempt to debauch my daughter?

Radamantus then fell to the ground, and asked pardon; but the Empress assured him, he should soon meet as shameful a death as he deserved.

Then, turning to her daughter, she said, My dear child, I am entirely convinced of thy innocence.

C H A P. X.

The Empress resigns her Dignity to her Daughter Sabrina.

THE Princess Sabrina having assured the Empre's of her duty and obedience, the execution of Radamantus was suspended; and for his greater mortification, the Empress resigned her dignity to her daughter, who was crowned Empress with the greatest solemnity and magnificence; and all the Nobles and Magistrates took the usual oaths; while acclamations of applause were given by the people; among whom nothing was to be heard but
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the joyful cry of Long Live the Empress Sabrina.

C H A P. XII.

Radamantus and his Concubine put to Death. the old Empress dies, and the young Empress marries the King of Germany, who are drove out of their Kingdom to a remote Island,

WHEN the coronation and rejoicings were over, Radamantus and his concubine were brought to their trial, and after being fully convicted of many treasons, received sentence of death, viz. That they should be dragged at two horses tails through the city to the place of execution, and there, under the common gallows, be consumed to ashes. This sentence in seven days after was executed, amidst a great multitude of spectators, who cried out, Behold the traitors! Behold the traitors!

These enemies destroyed, the young Empress lived and reigned happy, shewing love and affection to her subjects, and duty and obedience

obedience to her royal mother ; who died a few years after in the midst of a flourishing peace, leaving her beloved Sabrina, sole Empress of the Roman empire.

Soon after the death of her mother, Alexander, King of Germany, courted and married her, leaving his own kingdom to come and reside at Rome ; where he had not been long before he heard his land was invaded by the King of Macedon, who soon took it, and overspreading all Germany, were upon full march to besiege Rome.

This obliged the Emperor and Empress, with their two sons, and the Seven Wise Mistresses, to retire to a remote island, taking all things necessary with them for their accommodation ; and passed the rest of their days in a quiet and peaceable retirement ; and on their tombs were engraved the following epitaph :

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Within this house of stone
The King of Germany
With the great Roman
The chiefest earthly bliss
Whom Macedonia's King
Deprived of her country
But now they do enjoy
That cannot fade, where

F I E

E P I T A P H.

Of stone entombed lies
Germany, furnam'd the wise,
The Roman Empress his wife,
The earthly blessing of his life :
The King, in wrongful fight,
For country's crown and right,
To enjoy a heavenly crown,
He, where tyrants never come.

I N D E X